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ABSTRACT

This study explored the influences of prewriting activities on the writing quality of male and female students with varying academic achievement across four grade levels. Participants were public school students in grades 4, 6, 9, and 11. At each grade level, students were assigned to one of two groups: writing with prewriting activities or writing without prewriting activities. Teams of appropriate grade level teachers developed a pool of writing tasks, with one for each grade. The study was embedded into the 1996 Delaware large-scale writing assessment field test. Students in the prewriting group had a prewriting session in which they were encouraged to select a subject, collect information, list their ideas using a graphic organizer, prepare a first draft, and consult with peers for input. Researchers rated each student's writing piece holistically and on five quality aspects of writing. Results indicated that on average, students who wrote with prewriting activities performed better than students who wrote without prewriting activities in grades 4, 6, and 11. In grade 9, students who wrote without prewriting activities received higher scores. Students' gender and academic achievement level had strong influences on the effectiveness of prewriting, with females consistently scoring higher than males. (Contains 22 references.) (SM)

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ED 422 297

Prewriting Activities and Gender: Influences on the Writing Quality of Male and Female Students

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Introduction

Over the past decade, direct writing assessment has been used increasingly to evaluate students' writing skills despite many teachers discomfort with their use (Taylor, 1990). The short, impromptu writing tasks to assess students' writing skills is inconsistent with the currently popular craft workshop approach to teaching writing (Shedd & Bacharach, 1991). Many large scale writing assessment developers have attempted to bridge this gap between instruction and assessment by importing features of the writing process (e.g., prewriting, drafting, revising and editing) and the craft workshop approach (e.g., conferring) into the large-scale assessment (Taylor, 1990).

For example, A growing number of large-scale direct writing assessments have begun to include a variety of different kinds of prewriting activities. The move toward the inclusions of activities aimed at helping the writers plan their writing has occurred despite the lack of conclusive data on prewriting effects and how prewriting activities influence the quality of student writing. We designed this study to explore the influences of prewriting activities on writing quality for male and female students with varying academic achievement across four grade levels. Unlike previous research, our study used both holistic and domain scores to explicitly examine how prewriting activities affect student writing.

Background of Study

The writing process refers to a broad range of writer behaviors including defining the audience and the purpose of a writing task, planning the writing, and revising and editing the text (NAEP FACTS, 1996). Evidence from the 1992 National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP) grade 4, 8, and 12 assessment lends supports the others' findings that the use of the writing process is associated with higher writing proficiency skills. Students of teachers who report always encouraging students to engage in the elements of the writing process (e.g., planning and defining purpose and audience) were found to be generally better writers than students of teachers who reportedly never encourage these behaviors (NAEP FACTS, 1996, p. 5).

Experiences with large-scale direct writing assessments indicate low levels of generalizability across writing tasks; this limits the validity and poses problems regarding comparability and fairness (Dunbar, Koretz, & Hoover, 1991). Writing assessment designers have made efforts to correct these problems. For example, many writing experts believe that knowledge of the writing topic appears to be a significant predictor of student writing performance (Voss, et al., 1986; Mosenthal, 1984; Mosenthal, et al., 1985; DeGroff, 1986; La Roche, 1993). Students with high prior knowledge on the topic to be written about write

qualitatively better texts (Voss, et al., 1980). More recently, a team of researchers (Engelhart, et al., 1994) provided additional empirical evidence of the power of prior knowledge on students' text production. Specifically these researchers discovered the positive effect of direct experience on students' production of quality texts. Writing assessment designers use these findings to argue for the inclusion of well-designed prewriting activities as a component of large-scale assessments. The belief is that if students have the opportunity to become familiar with the content of the writing task, the construct-irrelevant variance will be reduced and the quality of students' writing will improve.

Zhang et al (1993) tested this theory. About 5,500 eighth graders were randomly assigned to two groups, writing with prewriting or writing without prewriting activities. Both groups of students responded to 20 writing tasks, of which 10 were descriptive tasks and 10 were explanatory tasks. On the average, students who were engaged in prewriting activities earned significantly higher mean writing scores than students who were not provided the same opportunity. This study also discovered that prewriting effects are associated with the type and the difficulty level of the writing task. Prewriting opportunities were particularly important in students crafting of written texts for explanatory prompts. Prewriting

opportunities were not important to students writing of responses to descriptive tasks.

Purpose of Study

The primary focus of the present study was to examine the impact of the use of prewriting activities on grade 4, 6, 9, and 11 students' writing performance. Of particular interest was the interactions between the use of prewriting activities with student gender and with student academic achievement. To investigate how prewriting activities influence students' writing performance, we used holistic and five quality aspects of composition skills (sentence formation, mechanics, word usage, development, and organization) in the analyses. The specific research questions addressed were:

1. Are there any prewriting effects on the quality of students' writing across grades 4, 6, 9, and 11?
2. Are there any significant interactive effects of prewriting activities with students' academic achievement across grades?
3. Are there any significant interactive effects of prewriting activities with student gender across grades?

Methods of Study

Subjects. A sample of 821 public school students in grades 4 (n=299), 6 (n=181), 9 (n=215) and 11 (n=125) participated in this study (Table 1). Among them, forty-eight percent of the students were males (n=394) and fifty-two percent of the students were females (n=427). Students at each grade sample were assigned to one of two groups: writing with prewriting activities and writing without prewriting activities. Since within class sampling was not possible, the unit of sampling was the classroom rather than the individual student. If a teacher had two classes participating in the study, each class was randomly assigned to a group to minimize the influences of instruction.

Writing Tasks. Consistent with the Delaware English Language Arts Standards and Performance Indicators (Appendix A), students were expected to use written English appropriate for various purposes and audience. The statewide writing assessment was designed to assess student performance relative to the standards. Teams of appropriate grade-level classroom teachers, selected by DOE staff, developed a pool of writing tasks. Each writing task specified an audience, purpose, subject, and occasion. Four writing tasks with satisfactory statistics in the field test, one task per grade, were selected for the study (see Table 2).

Test Administration. This study was embedded into the 1996 Delaware large-scale writing assessment field test. During the prewriting session, students were encouraged to select a subject, collect information, list their ideas using the graphic organizer, prepare for a first draft, and consult with their peers for input (see Appendix B) .

Scoring. Each students' writing piece was rated holistically and on the following five quality aspects of writing. Each students' writing was rated by two trained readers independent of one another, from a contractor using the State's modified holistic scoring rubrics (see Appendix C). If these scores were not in perfect or adjacent agreement (within one point of each other), the discrepancy was resolved by a third independent reader. The average perfect agreement among readers was about 67 percent across all grades in this study. Modified holistic scoring was designed to provide a single score indicating a student's overall writing achievement. The quality of student work was evaluated on purpose, audience, occasion, and subject. In addition, every paper was scored analytically by an independent reader on a 3-point scale in five domains: (1) sentence formation, (2) mechanics, (3) word usage, (4) development, and (5) organization. The intent of analytic scoring was to provide some diagnostic

feedback about the areas in which students might need improvement in order to achieve a higher holistic score.

Statistical Analyses. Holistic and domain scores were compared for students who were tested with and without prewriting activities by grade and gender. To determine the interactive effects of prewriting activities with gender and student academic achievement, a multivariate analysis of variance was conducted. Both holistic and domain scores were treated as dependent variables; prewriting activities and gender as independent variables; and students' reading and writing scores on the previous year's assessment as covariates.

Results of Study

Descriptive Statistics. We present the frequency distributions, means, standard deviations, and difference mean scores of the holistic scores between the two groups by testing condition and grade in Table 3. The statistics indicate that, on the average, students who wrote with prewriting activities performed better than students who wrote without prewriting activities in grades 4, 6, and 11. Among them, grade 11 students who wrote with prewriting activities evidenced the greatest difference mean score (.57) over students who wrote with no prewriting activities. However, students who wrote without prewriting activities

in grade 9 unexpectedly received a higher average score than their counterparts with a difference mean score of -.47.

Means and standard deviations of the domain scores for all groups are presented in Table 4. The average domain scores demonstrated a pattern similar to that exhibited with the holistic scores across grades. Students who wrote with prewriting activities in grade 11 received a higher mean score in all domains. Among the five domain scores, the greatest difference between the two groups was evidenced on the development score (difference mean score = .50). At grades 4 and 6, students who wrote with prewriting activities received a higher average score in development and organization.

ANOVA. We summarize the results of the one-way and two-way ANOVAs in Table 5. The one-way analysis of variance revealed students who wrote with prewriting activities in grade 4 ($p<.03$) and grade 11 ($p<.00$) had a statistically significantly higher mean score than students who wrote without prewriting activities. An F-value of 18.70 ($p<.00$) for grade 9 indicates that the group who wrote with prewriting activities scored significantly lower than the group who wrote without prewriting activities.

To determine the interactive effects, student gender and their academic background information were introduced into the two-way analysis of variance

(Table 5). Student scores on the 1995 statewide reading and writing assessments were used as covariates. The statistically significant covariates across the four grades suggest that the mean differences in the holistic scores are attributable not only to prewriting activities but also to the differences among students in their academic achievement in reading and writing, measured by their 1995 statewide assessment score. The interaction effects between prewriting activities and student gender were found statistically significant in grades 6 ($p<.05$) and 9 ($p<.05$); but not significant in grades 4 and 11. After the initial differences among students and the gender variables were controlled in the two-way ANOVA, a significant prewriting effect was found in grades 4 and 11; non-significant results were found in grade 6 and 9.

Since the interaction effects between prewriting activities and student gender were statistically significant in grades 6 and 9, one-way ANOVA was conducted again to examine how male and female students in each grade performed differently. The covariates were statistically significant for all male and female students (Table 6). The prewriting effects were significant for the female students in grade 6 ($p<.03$) and for the male students in grade 9 ($p<.02$).

MANOVA. Table 7 shows the results of multivariate and univariate MANOVAs for each grade. The five domain scores used as dependent variables

in the analysis, in addition to the holistic score (HS), are sentence formation (A1), mechanics (A2), word usage (A3), organization (A4), and development (A5). Based on the multivariate analysis (MANOVA), the two-way interaction effect between prewriting activities and gender were significant in grade 6 only. Similarly, a significant gender effect was found in grades 6 ($p<.00$) and 9 ($p<.05$). Data also suggest that prewriting activities strongly influenced the quality of writing for students in grades 4 and 11.

The statistics from univariate analyses revealed how prewriting activities affect the quality of student writing. Data indicate that students who wrote with prewriting activities received a significantly higher score in word usage (A3) in grades 4 and 6 and in development (A4) for students in grades 4 and 11. No significant prewriting effects were suggested on sentence formation (A1), mechanics (A2), and organization (A5) for any grade level. Moreover, a significant interaction between prewriting activities and gender was shown in development (A4) in grade 6 and in organization (A5) in grades 6 and 9.

Comparisons of Student Writing Scores Over Time. To examine if prewriting activities diminish gender differences in writing scores, especially before and after the prewriting activities were used in the statewide writing assessment, we compared means and standard deviations of writing scores for

male and female students from 1993 to 1997 across the four grades (Table 8). Data demonstrates that gender differences in writing remain similar although prewriting activities were applied in assessment during 1996 to 1997. The mean scores for female students were consistently higher than that for male students.

Discussion

The findings from this study reveal that prewriting effects are influenced by student gender, academic achievement level, and their interactions. Students who were given the opportunity of planning their writing scored higher, on the average, than students who were not given the same opportunity in grades 4, 6, and 11, with statistically significant results discovered in grades 4 and 11 only. Contrary to our expectations, the differences in domain scores between students tested who wrote prewriting activities and students who wrote without prewriting activities provided limited evidence to support the prewriting effects. Slightly higher scores in development and organization were found for the prewriting groups across the four grade levels. Even though students who wrote with prewriting activities in grades 4, 6, and 11 demonstrated better performance in the domains of development and organization, significant results were identified for students in grades 4 and 11 in the domain of development only.

Evidence across the four grades in this study strongly suggest that if the academic achievement level (e.g., previous test scores) from one group of students are substantially higher than the other group, prewriting effects are likely being affected extensively.

Like much of the previous research, we report discrepancy in writing scores between male and female students in this study. Female students consistently score higher than male students in holistic scores and in most of domain scores within each comparison group. Significant gender effects on the combination of holistic and domain scores have been identified in grades 6 and 9. The interactive effects of prewriting activities and gender had statistically strong influences on students' holistic scores in grades 6, 9, and 11.

In summary, it appears that giving students the opportunity to collect topic related information, through using prewriting techniques to organize their ideas into a draft has positive effects on student performance. Further evidence from this study suggests that students' gender and academic achievement level have strong influences on the effectiveness of prewriting. Although it was impossible within the context of this study to directly examine differences in opportunity to learn prewriting techniques (e.g., process writing instruction; different prewriting strategies) related to gender and student academic achievement, opportunity to

learn is likely an important factor accounting for the inconsistency of study findings across grades.

Limitation of Study

Some limitations must be realized in considering the implications of the findings from this study. First of all, using a volunteer sample for data collection may introduce large sampling errors. Other student characteristics, such as race and social economic status, and their potential interactions with prewriting activities should be considered in the future studies. The use of a single writing task also is likely to limit the generalization of the results to other types of writing discourse and underestimate its interactive effects with prewriting activities on student performance.

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TABLE 1. Sample of Students by Testing Condition, Gender, and Grade

	With Prewriting	*Without Prewriting*	*Total*
Grade 4			
Male	**81**	**76**	**157**
Female	**72**	**70**	**142**
Total	**153**	**146**	**299**
Grade 6			
Male	**42**	**41**	**83**
Female	**57**	**41**	**98**
Total	**99**	**82**	**181**
Grade 9			
Male	**35**	**67**	**102**
Female	**40**	**73**	**113**
Total	**75**	**140**	**215**
Grade 11			
Male	**18**	**34**	**52**
Female	**33**	**41**	**74**
Total	**51**	**75**	**126**
TOTAL	**378**	**443**	**821**

TABLE 2. Purpose and Topic of Writing Tasks and Means and Standard Deviations of Writing Tasks from Field Test

Grade	*Purpose of Writing Task*	*Topic of Writing Task*	*Mean*	*SD*
4	Expressive	Prized Possession	1.83	.64
6	Persuasive	Student of Math	2.20	.63
9	Informative	Historical Event	2.20	.74
11	Informative	Historical Event	2.50	.80

TABLE 3. Descriptive Statistics of Writing Scores by Testing Condition and Grade

		With Prewriting		Without Prewriting		Difference
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean Score
Grade 4	***holistic score***	2.12	.66	1.96	.65	.16
	sentence streucture	2.01	.73	1.92	.78	.09
	mechanics	1.92	.65	1.95	.78	-.03
	word usage	1.97	.44	1.95	.71	.02
	development	2.02	.64	1.93	.68	.09
	organization	1.94	.67	1.92	.71	.02
Grade 6	***holistic score***	2.32	.68	2.13	.59	.19
	sentence streucture	2.22	.63	2.28	.74	-.06
	mechanics	2.31	.57	2.26	.64	.05
	word usage	1.99	.47	2.17	.54	-.18
	development	2.21	.63	2.11	.57	.10
	organization	2.21	.63	2.16	.62	.05
Grade 9	***holistic score***	2.15	.71	2.62	.70	-.47
	sentence streucture	2.19	.74	2.53	.58	-.33
	mechanics	2.02	.69	2.31	.55	-.29
	word usage	2.10	.69	2.50	.52	-.40
	development	2.15	.67	2.44	.68	-.29
	organization	2.10	.80	2.46	.63	-.36
Grade 11	***holistic score***	3.04	.57	2.47	.82	.57
	sentence streucture	2.80	.46	2.52	.63	.28
	mechanics	2.67	.47	2.45	.65	.22
	word usage	2.69	.47	2.52	.56	.17
	development	2.82	.39	2.32	.71	.50
	organization	2.61	.49	2.44	.73	.17

TABLE 4 . Means and Standard Deviations of Writing Scores by Testing Condition, Gender and Grade

		With Prewriting		Without Prewriting	
		Male	*Female*	*Male*	*Female*
Grade 4	***holistic score***	**2.04 (.63)**	**2.21 (.68)**	**1.83 (.61)**	**2.09 (.66)**
	sentence structure	**1.94 (.74)**	**2.07 (.71)**	**1.88 (.78)**	**1.94 (.79)**
	mechanics	**1.80 (.67)**	**2.04 (.61)**	**1.87 (.72)**	**2.00 (.69)**
	word usage	**1.94 (.41)**	**1.99 (.47)**	**1.83 (.47)**	**1.90 (.46)**
	development	**1.97 (.64)**	**2.04 (.63)**	**1.78 (.69)**	**2.06 (.62)**
	organization	**1.82 (.64)**	**2.04 (.67)**	**1.83 (.68)**	**1.99 (.72)**
Grade 6	***holistic score***	**1.88 (.57)**	**2.49 (.64)**	**1.98 (.56)**	**2.29 (.55)**
	sentence structure	**2.25 (.67)**	**2.17 (.62)**	**2.34 (.73)**	**2.18 (.76)**
	mechanics	**2.23 (.62)**	**2.33 (.51)**	**2.29 (.64)**	**2.18 (.64)**
	word usage	**1.98 (.48)**	**2.00 (.49)**	**2.22 (.61)**	**2.10 (.45)**
	development	**1.90 (.55)**	**2.37 (.60)**	**2.02 (.61)**	**2.15 (.49)**
	organization	**1.98 (.58)**	**2.31 (.61)**	**2.15 (.57)**	**2.13 (.66)**
Grade 9	***holistic score***	**1.83 (.75)**	**2.39 (.59)**	**2.53 (.74)**	**2.70 (.65)**
	sentence structure	**2.04 (.74)**	**2.20 (.76)**	**2.33 (.67)**	**2.59 (.50)**
	mechanics	**1.96 (.68)**	**2.03 (.71)**	**2.14 (.59)**	**2.34 (.48)**
	word usage	**1.92 (.57)**	**2.20 (.76)**	**2.36 (.52)**	**2.51 (.50)**
	development	**1.80 (.71)**	**2.34 (.54)**	**2.27 (.73)**	**2.44 (.65)**
	organization	**1.80 (.76)**	**2.29 (.79)**	**2.36 (.70)**	**2.44 (.60)**
Grade 11	***holistic score***	**2.86 (.56)**	**3.14 (.55)**	**2.13 (.79)**	**2.75 (.73)**
	sentence structure	**2.73 (.46)**	**2.71 (.56)**	**2.30 (.75)**	**2.61 (.50)**
	mechanics	**2.40 (.51)**	**2.71 (.46)**	**2.27 (.74)**	**2.45 (.57)**
	word usage	**2.53 (.52)**	**2.62 (.50)**	**2.40 (.62)**	**2.52 (.51)**
	development	**2.67 (.49)**	**2.81 (.40)**	**2.03 (.77)**	**2.42 (.62)**
	organization	**2.53 (.52)**	**2.43 (.51)**	**2.20 (.81)**	**2.48 (.68)**

TABLE 5. Results of Two-Way ANOVAS by Grade

	Source	*df*	*F-value*	*p<*
Grade 4	Prewriting	**1**	**10.68**	**.00**
	Gender	**1**	**.81**	**.37**
	Prewriting x Gender	**1**	**.15**	**.70**
	Covariate	**3**	**46.88**	**.00**
Grade 6	Prewriting	**1**	**.71**	**.40**
	Gender	**1**	**20.58**	**.00**
	Prewriting x Gender	**1**	**4.09**	**.05**
	Covariate	**1**	**13.03**	**.00**
Grade 9	Prewriting	**1**	**3.08**	**.08**
	Gender	**1**	**3.33**	**.07**
	Prewriting x Gender	**1**	**3.67**	**.06**
	Covariate	**3**	**16.05**	**.00**
Grade 11	Prewriting	**1**	**3.88**	**.05**
	Gender	**1**	**8.07**	**.00**
	Prewriting x Gender	**1**	**1.99**	**.16**
	Covariate	**3**	**7.59**	**.00**

TABLE 6. Results of One -Way ANOVA for Grade 6

Source	*df*	*F-value*	*p<*
Grade 6 (male)			
Prewriting	1	.83	.37
Covariate	3	2.76	.05*
Grade 6 (female)			
Prewriting	1	4.62	.04*
Covariate	3	9.99	.00*

TABLE 7. Results of MANOVA by Grade

			Multivariate	*Univariate F-value*					
	Source	*df*	*F-value*	*H*	*D1*	*D2*	*D3*	*D4*	*D5*
Grade 4	Prewriting	1	3.24*	10.27*	3.72	.40	10.26*	4.68	1.48
	Gender	1	.31	.74	.13	.51	.01	.13	.62
	Prewriting x Gender	1	1.14	.21	2.35	1.98	.96	.80	.92
Grade 6	Prewriting	1	1.68	.08	.03	1.08	4.17*	.82	.49
	Gender	1	4.14*	16.26*	3.69	.46	.53	6.84	2.90
	Prewriting x Gender	1	2.21*	5.25*	1.37	1.98	1.46	7.39	7.09
Grade 9	Prewriting	1	.64	2.97	.92	.60	.87	1.16	1.57
	Gender	1	2.13*	7.76*	4.73*	3.50	3.29	2.35	6.19
	Prewriting x Gender	1	1.56	4.21*	.03	.13	.07	1.45	7.56
Grade 11	Prewriting	1	2.4*	5.08*	.27	.03	1.16	4.70	1.20
	Gender	1	1.02	4.34*	.07	.82	.05	2.63	.84
	Prewriting x Gender	1	1.15	1.53	1.05	2.31	.24	.48	2.80

1. H: Holistic score
2. D1-D5: Domine scores of Sentence structure; Mechnics; Word Usage; Development; and Organization
3. The underlined value is statistically significant at .05 level.

TABLE 8. Means of Writing Scores for Male and Female Students from 1993 to 1997 by Grade

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
	Without Prewriting			*With Prewriting*	
Grade 3					
Male	1.85	1.90	1.98	2.05	2.18
Femal	2.16	2.13	2.21	2.30	2.40
Grade 5					
Male	1.91	2.08	2.10	1.95	2.37
Femal	2.14	2.32	2.35	2.23	2.63
Grade 8					
Male	2.22	2.48	2.40	2.41	2.53
Femal	2.56	2.70	2.67	2.75	2.83
Grade 10					
Male	2.44	2.50	2.53	2.57	2.59
Femal	2.70	2.71	2.89	2.84	2.97

Appendix A

Delaware English Language Arts Content Standard #1:

Students will use written and oral English appropriate for various purposes and audiences.

Written communication:

Writing is a flexible and recursive process that encompasses identifying purpose and audiences, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.

Performance Indicators:

Writers will produce examples that illustrate the following discourse classification:

- Expressive (author-oriented)
- Informative (subject-oriented)
- Persuasive (audience-oriented)

Appendix B

Demonstration Prompt

Pre-Writing Activity
Teacher Directions

Distribute a student Pre-Writing Activity Sheet to each student. Remind students to keep the sheet on their desks and not to write in it at this time. Be certain that all students have a number two pencil and that students are seated so that they can speak quietly to the person next to them. You may want to draw the graphic organizer on the blackboard.

Say: Today we are beginning a writing test. This test will not count for part of your grade in this class but it is important for you to do your very best. All Delaware students in our grade will be taking a writing test this Spring.

I will give you a topic to write about but before you receive the writing topic, we will do an activity. This activity will help you prepare for the writing test.

Say: A lot of families take a vacation together sometime during the year. During a vacation, families spend some time away from home, work, and school to visit a place where they could enjoy themselves. Where have you gone for a vacation?

(Lead a brief discussion of places for vacations. Write some of these on the board. Allow up to 5 minutes.)

Say: Look at your Pre-Writing Activity Sheet now. (Hold one up to demonstrate.)

Read the first paragraph in your Pre-Writing Activity Sheet while I read it aloud.

Say: What are some places that YOU would like to visit for a vacation? These places can be anywhere in the world. On Chart 1 of your Pre-Writing Activity Sheet, list some of these vacation places that interest you. Then, choose the ONE place for your vacation that interests you the most. Finally, list some activities that you could do at your vacation place. List some activities that your family could do at the vacation place.

(Allow up to 10 minutes.)

Say: Now turn to the person sitting beside you and tell him or her your ideas for your vacation place and activities. As you share your ideas and listen to your partner's, some other ideas may occur to you. It is all right to revise your list as you share your ideas.

(Allow up to 10 minutes.)

Say: Look at Chart 2 of your Pre-Writing Activity Sheet. Think of reasons why your vacation place would be a good choice for your family. Think of why these reasons are important. Write your ideas on Chart 2.

(Allow up to 10 minutes.)

Graphic Organizer
Chart 1

Places I would like to visit for a vacation: The ONE vacation place that interests me the most: Activities I could do at the vacation place: Activities my family could do at the vacation place:

Graphic Organizer
Chart 2

My choice of vacation place:	
Reasons why this vacation place would be a good choice for my family.	Why are these reasons important? Why would my family think these are important reasons?

Say: You have now completed the Pre-Writing Activity Sheet. We will now take the writing test. I will give you a copy of the topic that you will be writing about.

Student Writing Assessment Sheet

Name: _____

School: _____

DIRECTIONS:

Read the writing topic in the box below:

When you arrive home from school, you learn that your family has won an all-expense paid vacation. You and your family are going to decide where to go. To help them decide, each family member is going to write a letter telling his or her choice of vacation place and why the family should choose this place.

Write a letter to your family telling your choice of vacation place and explaining reasons to persuade your family why they should agree with your choice.

Before you write, review what you have written on your Pre-Writing Activity Sheet. This information will give you ideas for your writing.

Also, before you write, think about:

- The ONE vacation place that you would like your family to visit.
- Why your choice is a good one for everyone in your family.
- Giving and explaining reasons for your choice of vacation place.
- The purpose of your writing: to persuade your family to agree with your choice of vacation place.
- That you are writing a letter to your family.

Appendix A

Delaware English Language Arts Content Standard #1:

Students will use written and oral English appropriate for various purposes and audiences.

Written communication:

Writing is a flexible and recursive process that encompasses identifying purpose and audiences, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing and publishing.

Performance Indicators:

Writers will produce examples that illustrate the following discourse classification:

- Expressive (author-oriented)
- Informative (subject-oriented)
- Persuasive (audience-oriented)

Appendix B

Demonstration Prompt

Pre-Writing Activity
Teacher Directions

Distribute a student Pre-Writing Activity Sheet to each student. Remind students to keep the sheet on their desks and not to write in it at this time. Be certain that all students have a number two pencil and that students are seated so that they can speak quietly to the person next to them. You may want to draw the graphic organizer on the blackboard.

Say: Today we are beginning a writing test. This test will not count for part of your grade in this class but it is important for you to do your very best. All Delaware students in our grade will be taking a writing test this Spring.

I will give you a topic to write about but before you receive the writing topic, we will do an activity. This activity will help you prepare for the writing test.

Say: A lot of families take a vacation together sometime during the year. During a vacation, families spend some time away from home, work, and school to visit a place where they could enjoy themselves. Where have you gone for a vacation?

(Lead a brief discussion of places for vacations. Write some of these on the board. Allow up to 5 minutes.)

Say: Look at your Pre-Writing Activity Sheet now. (Hold one up to demonstrate.)

Read the first paragraph in your Pre-Writing Activity Sheet while I read it aloud.

Say: What are some places that YOU would like to visit for a vacation? These places can be anywhere in the world. On Chart 1 of your Pre-Writing Activity Sheet, list some of these vacation places that interest you. Then, choose the ONE place for your vacation that interests you the most. Finally, list some activities that you could do at your vacation place. List some activities that your family could do at the vacation place.

(Allow up to 10 minutes.)

Say: Now turn to the person sitting beside you and tell him or her your ideas for your vacation place and activities. As you share your ideas and listen to your partner's, some other ideas may occur to you. It is all right to revise your list as you share your ideas.

(Allow up to 10 minutes.)

Say: Look at Chart 2 of your Pre-Writing Activity Sheet. Think of reasons why your vacation place would be a good choice for your family. Think of why these reasons are important. Write your ideas on Chart 2.

(Allow up to 10 minutes.)

Graphic Organizer
Chart 1

Places I would like to visit for a vacation:
The ONE vacation place that interests me the most:
Activities I could do at the vacation place:
Activities my family could do at the vacation place:

Graphic Organizer
Chart 2

My choice of vacation place:	
Reasons why this vacation place would be a good choice for my family.	Why are these reasons important? Why would my family think these are important reasons?

Say: You have now completed the Pre-Writing Activity Sheet. We will now take the writing test. I will give you a copy of the topic that you will be writing about.

Student Writing Assessment Sheet

Name: _____

School: _____

DIRECTIONS:

Read the writing topic in the box below:

When you arrive home from school, you learn that your family has won an all-expense paid vacation. You and your family are going to decide where to go. To help them decide, each family member is going to write a letter telling his or her choice of vacation place and why the family should choose this place.

Write a letter to your family telling your choice of vacation place and explaining reasons to persuade your family why they should agree with your choice.

Before you write, review what you have written on your Pre-Writing Activity Sheet. This information will give you ideas for your writing.

Also, before you write, think about:

- The ONE vacation place that you would like your family to visit.
- Why your choice is a good one for everyone in your family.
- Giving and explaining reasons for your choice of vacation place.
- The purpose of your writing: to persuade your family to agree with your choice of vacation place.
- That you are writing a letter to your family.

Appendix C

Delaware Holistic Scoring Rubrics

Development	*Organization*	*Sentence Formation*	*Word Choice and Style*	*Conventions*
• 4 The response has sufficient, specific, and relevant details that are fully elaborated to meet the needs of the audience and fulfill the intended purpose of the writing.	• 4 The response is unified with smooth transitions, a clear and logical progression of ideas, and an effective introduction and closure to meet the needs of the audience and fulfill the intended purpose of the writing.	• 4 Sentences are consistently complete and appropriately varied in length and structure to meet the needs of the audience and fulfill the intended purpose of the writing.	• 4 A consistent style and precise and vivid word choice meet the needs of the audience and fulfill the intended purpose of the writing.	• 4 Errors in standard written English are rarely evident and do not interfere with audience understanding and fulfillment of the intended purpose of the writing.
• 3 The response has specific details but may lack sufficient OR relevant OR adequate elaboration of the details to fully meet the needs of the audience and fulfill the purpose.	• 3 The response is generally unified with some transitions, a clear progression of ideas, and an introduction and closure which partially meet the needs of the audience and fulfill the purpose.	• 3 Sentences are generally complete and sufficiently varied in length and structure to meet the needs of the audience and fulfill the purpose.	• 3 The style and generally precise word choice are effective for the audience and purpose.	• 3 A few varieties of errors in standard written English are occasionally evident but rarely interfere with audience understanding and fulfillment of the purpose.
• 2 The response has some specific details but they are insufficient in quantity, relevance, and/or elaboration to meet the needs of the audience and fulfill the purpose.	• 2 The response has some unity but lacks transitions OR an introduction or closure OR a clear progression of ideas that may confuse the audience and weaken the attempt to fulfill the purpose.	• 2 Some sentence formation errors, as well as a lack of sentence variety, confuse the audience and weaken the attempt to fulfill the purpose.	• 2 The word choice is sometimes general and repetitive or may not be effective for the audience and purpose.	• 2 Several varieties of errors in standard written English are occasionally evident and they interfere with audience understanding and fulfillment of the purpose.
• 1 The response has few or no specific details or they are so brief that there is a minimal attempt to meet the needs of the audience and fulfill the purpose.	• 1 The response lacks unity, resulting in audience confusion.	• 1 Frequent and severe sentence formation errors, and/or a lack of sentence variety, confuse the audience and the purpose is not fulfilled.	• 1 The word choice is often general, repetitive, and/or confusing, and is not effective for the audience and purpose.	• 1 Frequent errors in standard written English interfere with audience understanding and fulfillment of the purpose.

Appendix C (cont.)

Delaware Analytic Scoring Rubrics

Sentence Formation

3 Sentences are somewhat varied in length and structure. There are few, if any, run-ons or fragments.

2 There is basically good sentence structure with occasional awkward or confusing constructions. There may be several run-ons or fragments.

1 There are many problems with sentence structure. Simple sentence patterns are used. Run-ons and fragments may be common.

Mechanics

3 Punctuation, capitalization and spelling are consistently controlled. There may be a few errors, but none are significant.

2 Punctuation, capitalization and spelling are adequate, but there may be evidence of a lack of understanding of several rules of mechanics

1 Capitalization is erratic and basic punctuation is omitted or haphazard or basic words are misspelled interfering with readability.

Word Usage

3 Vocabulary is carefully used. There are few problems with subject/verb agreement, correct forms of verbs, selection of pronouns, or possessives.

2 Vocabulary is adequate. There may be errors in usage.

1 Vocabulary is limited, and/or the response is replete with errors in usage.

Development

3 Some elaborated and organized details enhance the clarity of the response.

2 Details are specific with little or no claboration

1 Few details are included in a very brief response. If present, details may be vague and sketchy.

Organization

3 All details focus on the topic and are presented in a logical order.

2 A rudimentary organizational strategy is apparent, but minor gaps and repetitions occur.

1 There is no overall organizational strategy. Ideas are presented in a random or repetitive fashion.